19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
Karen AP7

CHAPTER IV

MENTAL AND MORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KAREN

181 The Karen draws the blinds over the windows of his heart and 829 leaves one to wonder what goes on within. I once asked an educated 609 Karen what he thought was the chief characteristic of his race, and he immediately replied that they are a people who can be afraid. 776 Centuries of subjugation and oppression have filled them with fear. 156 During the protracted period of their tribulations, to be caught by a Burman was to be stripped of everything, even of one's clothing, and to be beaten into the bargain. Where only a few families lived on the plains, the women with child dared not undergo confinement in their houses, lest they could not escape from a sudden attack by their oppressors. Karen cartmen still drive around a village rather than through it, although they know there is little danger of having dogs set on them, as there used to be. Not only does the Karen fear his fellow-men, but he is also terrified by the strange and weird beings, demons and ghosts, with which his imagination and credulity people the world. Should he, even by chance, offend any of these—and it is easily done he thinks—he must live in dread of their vengeance. His religion is one of fear, precaution, and propitiatory sacrifice. The trepidations of the past have been perpetuated through generations and, though education has stifled them in a measure, they still crop out on occasion even in the most advanced members of the race.

626 The Karen is led into all sorts of difficulties by his timidity. 156 He is apprehensive and desirous of avoiding trouble with officers 609 or others. When brought into court to answer questions, often this fear will lead him to deny any knowledge of the facts, instead of relating what he has seen; or he may acknowledge the opposite of what he wants to prove. Not long ago I heard of a man who had what seemed to be a good case, but on the witness-stand he swore to the opposite of what he had told previously. When asked why he did so, he replied that he was so scared that he did not know what he was saying. In thus yielding to his timidity the Karen often in-